



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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NOAA Fisheries Service Announces New Regulations for South Atlantic Black Sea Bass (Regulations effective July 1, 2012)

NOAA Fisheries Service has published a final rule to implement Amendment 18A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 18A). The primary purpose of Amendment 18A is to implement management measures that optimize fishing opportunities for black sea bass, improve data reporting in the for-hire sector of the snapper-grouper fishery, and update the black sea bass rebuilding strategy according to the results of a new stock assessment.

The final rule for Amendment 18A includes:

Commercial Sector Measures

- An endorsement program for the commercial black sea bass pot segment of the snapper-grouper fishery, where only endorsement holders who meet certain landings criteria and also have a valid Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit are allowed to use pot gear to harvest black sea bass.
- An appeals process for the black sea bass pot endorsement program.
- Modifications to commercial accountability measures.
- A limit of 35 black sea bass pot tags issued to each endorsement holder each permit year.
- A requirement to bring black sea bass pots back to shore at the end of each trip.
- A 1,000 pounds gutted weight (1,180 pounds whole weight) commercial trip limit for the black sea bass commercial sector.
- An increase to the commercial minimum size limit for black sea bass from 10 inches total length (TL) to 11 inches TL.

*The commercial fishing season for black sea bass opens July 1, 2012.

Recreational Sector Measures

- An increase to the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass from 12 inches TL to 13 inches TL.
- Modifications to recreational accountability measures.

- A requirement for selected for-hire vessels to report landings information electronically on a weekly or daily basis.

Black Sea Bass Pot Endorsement Information

- NOAA Fisheries Service will mail each eligible permittee a black sea bass pot endorsement via certified mail by July 1, 2012.
- An eligible permittee who does not receive an endorsement from the Regional Administrator, must contact the Regional Administrator no later than October 1, 2012, to clarify his/her endorsement status. The only item subject to appeal is initial eligibility for the black sea bass pot endorsement based on ownership of a qualifying Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit, the accuracy of the amount of landings, and correct assignment of landings to the permittee. Appeals based on hardship factors will not be considered. Appeals must be submitted to the Regional Administrator at:

NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33071-5505

- Appeals must be postmarked no later than October 1, 2012, and must contain documentation supporting the basis for the appeal including copies of NOAA Fisheries Service logbooks and or/state landings records if NOAA Fisheries Service logbooks are not available. The Regional Administrator will review all appeals, render final decisions on the appeals, and advise the appellant of the final decision.
- As stated in previous fishery bulletins, a 30-day freeze on transfers of Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permits with black sea bass landings using black sea bass pot gear between 1999 and 2010 will begin on June 1, 2012.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

More Information

For more information on Amendment 18A please click on this link to the Amendment 18A Frequently Asked Questions

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm> or view the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web page at: www.safmc.net.

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